



# County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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Fifth District

November 4, 2015

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor  
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl  
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Sachi A. Hamai  
Chief Executive Officer

## REPORT BACK ON THE PREPAREDNESS FOR RAINFALL DUE TO THE PREDICTED EL NIÑO EVENT (ITEM NO. S-1, AGENDA OF OCTOBER 13, 2015)

On October 13, 2015, on a motion by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, the Board instructed the Chief Executive Officer with input from relevant departments (Fire, Sheriff, Public Health, and Public Works) to report back to the Board on additional specific preparations for the predicted El Niño event.

Additional information was requested on **Coordinated Department Response**: How we are ensuring communication and coordination with County departments in response to and recovery from El Niño; **Public Communication**: How we are communicating with the public, our stakeholders, and independent cities; **Interagency Coordination**: How we are sharing information and collaborating with the cities.

County departments have been closely monitoring emerging predictions of the current El Niño season. Concern about preparedness, communication, and coordination is increasing in the community due to increased awareness of the complications and implications of a severe El Niño. This El Niño has been described as one of the strongest that has impacted the County. Our Office of Emergency Management has been working with the National Weather Service to obtain the most up-to-date information and predictions to base their decisions, preparedness measures, and guidance. The recommendations are discussed in more detail in Attachment A.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"*

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If you have any questions or require any additional information, please contact Jeff L. Reeb of the Office of Emergency Management at (323) 980-2261, or by email at [jreeb@ceooem.lacounty.gov](mailto:jreeb@ceooem.lacounty.gov).

SAH:TT:JLR  
LL:lac

Attachment

c:     Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
         County Counsel  
         Sheriff  
         Fire  
         Public Health  
         Public Works

OEM:B100691

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE  
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**PLANNING FOR RAINFALL DUE TO A PREDICTED EL NIÑO EVENT  
(ITEM NO. S-1, AGENDA OF OCTOBER 13, 2015)  
NOVEMBER 2015**

**Background**

Strong El Niño conditions are currently observed across the Equatorial Pacific. This El Niño is currently the second strongest, behind the 1997/1998 event. The peak of the event is still expected during late fall, early winter then gradually weakening during the spring/summer. During the winter, odds currently favor above-normal precipitation across Southern California along with above-normal temperatures.

**Coordinated Department Response**

The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is responsible for coordination of the County's emergency planning and training in advance of any storm, will assist in the emergency response phase and will be directing the initial recovery operations. OEM also collaborates in the activation and staffing of the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC).

The CEOC would be activated in response to any major storm to address emergency protective measures, public information and notification, monitoring of field events, and coordinating and communicating with jurisdictional partners. The CEOC is the designated location to collect and disseminate timely and critical information to County leadership, County departments, and the public.

County departments report to the CEOC during activations and others can be requested, or called upon for their subject matter expertise. Traditional emergency management partners, County Fire, Sheriff, Public Works, Animal Care and Control, and Public Health are standard CEOC responders. However, in events such as El Niño, other departments and agencies could be called upon.

The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and The Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District are additional resources that will be included in any El Niño response and recovery activity. Beaches and Harbors, Parks and Recreation, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and sections of the Chief Executive's Office (Real Estate and Risk Management) are coordinated with, or are available for specific tasks before, during or after the storm. However, all departments are kept abreast of current events during activations via the Basic Notification Group communication plan.

Planning for the upcoming storm track involves all County departments through drills, webinars, and pre-event planning. For the independent cities and special districts which form the Los Angeles County Operational Area, OEM coordinates on an almost daily basis to address routine emergencies, special events, and severe weather.

When severe weather is forecast, OEM will convene an Operational Area Severe Weather Planning Conference Call to inform jurisdictional partners and County departments of the latest storm prediction, planning activities and collaboration before, during, and after the storm.

Any outstanding requests for assistance by the cities are placed with the County during these calls, or by using the CEOC software reporting system (OARRS). The call includes the leadership element from each of the threatened community's key departments: Fire, Law, Emergency Management, Public Works, Public Health and City Management.

As the weather event unfolds, OEM maintains constant communication with the impacted jurisdictions to share information and address emerging needs.

### **Public Communication**

Communication with the jurisdictions and the general public, including our vulnerable communities, is one of the priorities in the County's response to El Niño. Use of traditional communication modes such as broadcast and print media will be utilized, as well as social media and the County's El Niño website at <http://www.lacounty.gov/elnino>.

The hashtag #LARain has been established and has been widely used on Twitter by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, County departments, and the public. The popularity of Twitter during emergencies will amplify the messages we distribute through traditional channels, such as press releases and media interviews. Press Releases are distributed via the CEO Countywide Communications protocol which includes virtually every media outlet in Southern California, including the ethnic outlets.

The County has established a unified multilingual El Niño website that can be updated in real time from anywhere, and can be translated into 83 different languages. The website is utilized as a repository for storm information for residents and jurisdictional partners. As more El Niño specific documents are produced or developed, they will be placed on the website.

For multi-departmental responses and incidents including El Niño, the County has adopted a One Voice Messaging strategy. The strategy is to produce consistent, compelling and plain language messaging that resonates with key audiences.

The development of successful communication strategies is based upon careful analysis of who is the intended audience. Given the County's linguistic and cultural diversity,

messaging will be provided to community partners to address at risk and vulnerable populations, including those who live in high flood areas, foothill communities with access and functional needs, and the homeless.

Specific to the unique needs of homeless populations, for homeless families with children, the Homeless Families Solutions System (HFSS) provides crisis housing for homeless families. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), which administers HFSS, there is adequate capacity through HFSS to address an increase in the need for crisis housing for homeless families, which may result from El Niño.

Given that flood control features frequently house homeless populations, OEM, in cooperation with the CEO Homeless Initiative, is developing pre-event information for the occupants of these encampments to encourage them to relocate before the arrival of severe weather.

Following severe storms, media releases from Public Health alerting residents to health risks associated with stormwater, or water runoff, will be a part of the strategy, as well as risks from standing water for West Nile Virus. Having a coordinated One Voice Messaging strategy ensures post event health messaging is tied to the communication strategy.

The public will be encouraged to stay connected for up-to-date information. We encourage everyone to register their cell phone number and e-mail address in Alert LA County, the County's reverse 911 system. Other communication tools to notify and communicate with the public will be by the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which can transmit over standard television and radio channels. When acute weather events strike within Los Angeles County, the National Weather Service frequently issues alerts and warnings via cell phones, using the Wireless Emergency Alert System (WEA).

211 LA County will be utilized as the public information and referral line. Information and press releases will be shared with 211 to alert residents of updated and timely information being provided by government sources. OEM will employ 211 to assist residents with damage assessment collection following any damaging storm, and 211 operators can provide assistance to those who do not have access to a computer or Internet.

Residents will be encouraged to take steps to make themselves safe and avoid property damage by cleaning out their gutters, reviewing flood insurance information, and securing large items that can be swept away. Information on sandbags can also be found on the El Niño website.

Messaging to residents will encourage them to have a Family Disaster Kit in case of evacuations, and to complete a Family Disaster Plan so they know what to do before, during, and after a disaster. Those residents who have taken emergency preparedness community trainings, such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), have the necessary training to assist their neighbors and family during an El Niño. CERT training is multi-hazard in nature as the curriculum reflects an all hazard, all risk approach to preparedness.

## **Interagency Coordination**

County departments continue to coordinate with jurisdictional partners, faith and community based organizations, private sector and non-profits. Information is being shared with key stakeholders, and coordination with utility partners is occurring now.

County departments are coordinating their participation in community meetings and have developed and shared standard El Niño talking points and departmental information. This allows any County department to amplify another department's preparedness messaging to the public and stakeholders. A master calendar has been established and shared with departments.

Public Works sent letters to all city managers, the various town councils, and each Council of Government within the County, advising them of the availability of speakers at any storm season planning and preparedness meeting that these entities may be in the process of convening. They were advised that the County has placed a schedule of upcoming community meetings on the El Niño website.

OEM is partnering with the National Weather Service to conduct ad hoc conference calls to discuss predictions of future storms. El Niño focused webinars will be scheduled with relevant topics for preparedness to assist jurisdictions in their storm planning. Information is being provided to each of the eight Disaster Management Area Coordinators to share with their member cities, and emergency management software system (OARRS) training is being scheduled for cities to practice and train in advance of any CEOC activation.

So that personnel from County departments, independent cities, and special districts are prepared for their emergency management roles during severe weather, OEM conducts ongoing emergency operations center training and exercises.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, OEM will, in coordination and collaboration with County departments and jurisdictional partners, continue to prepare and plan for a robust El Niño weather pattern. Communication and outreach to jurisdictional partners will increase as we get closer to the anticipated heavy rain period of El Niño, and we will continue to stress the importance of personal preparedness to residents. Resources will be added to the El Niño website and shared with all partners. As events unfold, OEM will continue to brief Board of Supervisors offices via the Basic Notification Group messages, direct emails, and staff briefings.